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March 10, 2010

Dear Governor Rell and CT Legislators:

As the Executive Director of Bethsaida Community, Inc. I ask for your support in stopping the proposed elimination of DSS homeless funding. Should any cuts go through, it will have harmful effects on the Katie Blair House program and the communities we serve. While I understand the need for decreasing state expenses, **cutting homeless programs makes no sense!**

Bethsaida has provided housing and support services to homeless women for over 23 years. We have a constant waiting list of women who are desperate to get into our programs. No woman is happy to be homeless – the women come to Bethsaida because they have no where else to go, and are hoping to change their lives. While most of the women come from Norwich and New London, we have helped women from: Central Village, Danielson, Dayville, East Windsor, Enfield, Groton, Hampton, Hartford, Jewett City, Manchester, Mansfield, Meriden, Middletown, Milford, Montville, Mystic, New Britain, New Haven, Niantic, Norwalk, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Pawcatuck, Plainfield, Sharon, Stamford, Stonington, Uncasville, Voluntown, Waterbury, Waterford, Willimantic, Windsor, and Woodbury.

Through Bethsaida's Katie Blair House (transitional housing) program, each year 30 women receive housing and support services such as: daily living skills, budgeting, employment and educational issues, mental health issues, and substance abuse recovery issues. Through the support services, the residents gain the skills necessary to help them eventually transition into independent living in society. Women who stay in our program over 3 months have an 82% success rate.

Despite our clients' felonies and misdemeanors, Bethsaida has a proven record of getting homeless women into jobs, positively contributing to society, and eventually living independently. Please protect current levels of DSS homeless funding to allow us to help Connecticut's most vulnerable and deserving women. If you have any questions, I can be reached at (860) 886-7511 x 201 or bethsaidacommunity@yahoo.com Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Claire Silva
Executive Director

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